

**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF  
STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN ANIMAL LAW SECTION  
AND  
ATTORNEYS FOR ANIMALS, INC.  
IN SUPPORT OF HB 4478**

**STATE OF MICHIGAN, SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

December 8, 2015

Honorable Rick Jones  
Chair, Judiciary Committee  
24th State Senate District  
Michigan Senate

Chair Jones and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of [HB 4478](#) which allows domestic violence victims who have an “ownership interest” in an animal to include that animal in personal protection orders.

I represent the State Bar of Michigan (SBM) Animal Law Section, and Attorneys for Animals (AFA), a Michigan nonprofit and 501(c)(3) organization based in Canton. Please note that the Animal Law Section is not the SBM, but rather a voluntary organization and that the Section’s position is not that of the SBM. The Section’s position statement (*Attachment A*), gives additional information about the Section and its decision-making process. AFA’s position statement also is included (*Attachment B*).

**HB 4478 acknowledges the well-established Link or connection between domestic violence and animal abuse.** Domestic violence involves a range of controlling behaviors. A growing body of research indicates that a significant number of individuals who abuse their partners also abuse their pets as part of this repertoire of controlling behaviors. (*Simmons and Lehmann 2007*).

The bill clarifies the victim’s right, and the judge’s authority, to include animals in protective orders. This is important due to:

- The sheer numbers
  - 128.8 million US households own a pet, of which 97.3 million own cats or dogs
  - 312.1 million total pets owned, including 85.8 million cats and 77.8 million dogs([http://americanpetproducts.org/press\\_industrytrends.asp](http://americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp))
- Their importance to victims of domestic violence: fear for household animals’ welfare is a significant barrier preventing or delaying abuse victims escaping the situation. Twelve independent surveys have reported between 18% and 48% of battered women have delayed their decision to leave, or have returned to the batterer out of fear for their pets or livestock (*Ascione 2007*)
- Upwards of 71% of victims in domestic violence shelters report that their abuser harmed, killed or threatened family pets (*Ascione, Weber & Wood 1997*)

**The past 10 years has seen a growing recognition that legislative bodies have a significant role to play in addressing the Link.** This legislation places Michigan on par with 28 US states – nearly 60% of all states – as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, which have enacted similar legislation

since Maine became the first in 2006. (AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, HI, IL, IA, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, SC, TN, TX, VT, VA, WA, WV; also Washington, DC and Puerto Rico) (Animal Legal and Historical Center <https://www.animallaw.info/article/domestic-violence-and-pets-list-states-include-pets-protection-orders>; National Link Coalition <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PPO-Summary-by-State-3-2015.pdf>)

A bill in Congress, [HR 1258, the PAWS Act](#), (Pet and Women Safety Act of 2015) which has bi-partisan support and 172 co-sponsors (as of December 7, 2015), would strengthen federal law regarding domestic violence victims and their pets, and specifically calls on states to include pets in domestic violence protection orders. ["It is the sense of Congress that States should encourage the inclusion of protections against violent or threatening acts against the pet of the person in domestic violence protection orders." (SEC. 4)]. The American Veterinary Medical Association endorses the PAWS Act, stating that it is "consistent with information regarding co-occurrence of animal abuse and domestic violence and state legislative responses in the wake of research in this area." (<https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/150515e.aspx>)

These laws can be effective: in Minnesota, which passed a law in 2010, the number of animals in protection orders increased from 165 that first year, to 1067 in 2013. ([National LINK Coalition's LINK-Letter, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 2014, p. 5, Pet Protective Order Statistics Reported in Minnesota](#))

### **Government and Private Partnership address an important societal concern**

This issue is being addressed by nonprofit organizations as well as by legislatures. Of the many organizations which devote resources to assisting people escape violent situations with their animals. I will mention two, because members of the groups I'm speaking on behalf of today, are involved in both:

- Sheltering Animals & Families Together™ (SAF-T) which guides domestic violence shelters on how to house families together with their pets and which has published the [SAF-T Start-Up Manual](#) setting forth three housing styles and answering questions about how to safely house pets on-site at a domestic violence shelter. ( <http://alliephillips.com/saf-tprogram/>)
- Red Rover, a 501(c)(3) organization provides a variety of resources, including monetary grants for individual victims of domestic violence (Safe Escape) and for shelters (Safe Housing); and a database, by zip code connecting victims to the nearest safe place for their animals. (<http://www.redrover.org/redrover-relief-domestic-violence-resources>)

The Animal Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan and Attorneys for Animals ask that the members support the bill and vote it favorably out of this Committee.

Very truly yours,



Beatrice M. Friedlander, JD  
Member, Animal Law Section, State Bar of Michigan  
President, Attorneys for Animals, Inc.